Re. 10/-

भारतसमाजीय

विवाहप्रयोगः

VEDIC MARRIAGE RITUAL

VEDIC MARRIAGE RITUAL IN A SIMPLE FORM

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE Vedic rituals, now in vogue, of marriage and other *Saṃskāras* or sacraments are very elaborate, and their practice at present is not accompanied with a proper understanding of the meaning and the significance of the several parts, either on the part of the performer or on the part of the officiating priest, while their perfunctory performance is a notorious fact. This has led to a complete indifference, and even neglect on the part of a large number of educated unbelievers, and to a demand for simple and significant rituals on the part of believers, who are no less in number. Such a demand has been addressed to me from the following:

(1) Those who believe in the Vedic rituals and desire to observe the Vedic *Saṃskāras* with proper understanding. These include some non-Brāhmaṇas as well as Brāhmaṇas.

(2) The social reformers who wish to be self-reliant in conducting *Saṃskāras* without having to resort to professional priests who, for various reasons, hesitate, and in most cases refuse to officiate in their families.

(3) Those who live in places where professional priests are not easily available and who themselves wish to conduct the rituals.

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(4) Those who desire to have the existing rituals free from what they regard as accretions of ages, which have smothered the essential vital portions beyond recognition with masses of accessory ritualistic elements of a very subordinate or doubtful value.

In response to a very persistent demand I have given deep thought to the matter and have found a way to meet the demand.

The framework of the rituals now used is based on the ritualistic manuals known as Gṛhya-Sūtras, of which there are nearly fifteen, distributed among the several Vedic schools or Śākhās. Among the authors of these manuals, Āśvalāyana alone of a Ṛg-Vedic school has proposed to record the course of the several *Saṃskāras* in their essential elements which are common to all schools, as distinguished from those elements which are peculiar to some specific communities or families, and which are therefore accidental or unessential—leaving these latter to be learnt from the oral tradition current in the communities and families concerned. The course of rituals, therefore, as laid down in the Āśvalāyana-Gṛhya-Sūtra may, for the present, be regarded as the irreducible minimum.

We may take the marriage ritual as an illustration. I give here the course of the marriage ritual as laid down in Āśvalāyana's manual, which is indeed the shortest, embodying only the essential elements.

The marriage ritual as given in this and other manuals is made up of three parts:

(1) *Vivāha-homa*, Marriage Sacrifice.

(2) *Gṛha-praveśa*, Home-entry. This is the formal taking possession, by the newly married couple, of their new household (as its master and mistress) set up, as the original idea was, out of the husband's portion of his family property and the wife's dowry brought from her parents.

(3) Three days' life of celibacy leading to consummation, *Garbhādhāna.*

The first part constitutes the marriage proper, making, according to Manu, of the bridegroom and the bride an inseparable pair as husband and wife. As made up of these three parts taking place without any interval, the whole ritual was originally intended for adult men and women, fit at the time for consummation of marriage and able to set up and manage their own household.

Curiously enough, there is no place in the Vedic ritual for the ceremony of *Kanyā-dāna* ('the giving away of the bride') to which Smṛtis and Purāṇas attach so much importance, and for *Maṅgala-Sūtra-bandhana* ('the tying of an auspicious string round the bride's neck') which, in eye of the lay people, and of the womenfolk especially, is a most essential element in the marriage ceremony.

The ritual formulated here on the higher authority now available may be regarded as tentative—as capable of further improvement. In the first place the ritual has to be adapted to other Śākhās by some slight changes, though the ritual, as it is, may be safely followed even

by those other Śākhās. A rational study of the subject will certainly discover several other lines of improvement, the Āśvalāyana-Gṛhya-Sūtra itself suggesting a very important one. In its opening section it is declared, on the authority of a Vedic text quoted there, that for a ritual to be effective external fire and oblations are not absolutely necessary; that mere adoration with prayers in the terms of the *mantras* used in the ritual is a sacrifice quite as real and operative as the ritual with fire and oblations. The idea underlying this declaration is that worship in thought is the vital element of the ritual, while the fire and oblations serve as the outward symbol and expression of the inner mood of worship, enabling the worshipper to fix his wavering mind on the ritual. On this principle the marriage ritual may take the form of prayers and addresses in the terms of the *mantras* now used in the course of the ritual. In this form it will no doubt commend itself to those who do not attach any importance to the reputed magic effects of fire-sacrifices, or have no faith in them. Evidently the latter part of the nuptial hymn (Ṛg-Veda, X. 85. 20-47) is a collection of such prayers and addresses as made up the marriage ceremony of old in this form, including the three parts, *Pāṇi-grahaṇa*, *Gṛha-praveśa* and *Garbhādhāna*, all of which took place in the bridegroom's abode, to which the bride was first led in procession.

विवाहप्रयोगः

प्रथमो भागः—पाणिग्रहणहोमः

संकल्पः

१. वरः स्वयमासनमध्यास्य, वधूं दक्षिणत उपवेश्य, प्राणानायम्य, देशकालौ संकीर्त्य, मम सहधर्मचारिणीसंबन्धसंपादनीयौपासनाग्निपरिग्रहणद्वारा श्रीपरमेश्वरप्रीत्यर्थं पाणिग्रहणहोमं करिष्ये इति संकल्प्य,

अग्निमुखं, द्रव्यसंस्कारश्च

२. इषुमात्रावरं सर्वतः स्थण्डिलं उपलिप्य, उल्लिख्य षल्लेखाः, तदभ्युक्ष्य, अग्निं प्रतिष्ठाप्य,

३. प्रत्यगग्नेः दृषदं सोपलां प्रतिष्ठाप्य, प्रागुदीच्याम् उदकुम्भं धान्यराशेरुपरि निधाय, पल्लवैरपिधाय, गन्धपुष्पैरलंकृत्य, उदगग्नेः सप्ततण्डुलराशीनुपकल्प्य, समन्वारब्धायां वध्वां, अन्वाधाय, परिसमूह्य, परिस्तीर्य, तूष्णीं पर्युक्ष्य,

THE MARRIAGE RITUAL

PART I. MARRIAGE SACRIFICE

The Main Purpose

1. The bridegroom having taken his seat, the bride is seated to his right. Then, after regulating breath (*prāṇāyāma*) and calling to his mind the auspicious time and place, he proposes as follows: I will perform the Marriage Sacrifice, *Pāṇigrahaṇa-homa*, to win the Grace of the Blessed One, the Supreme Lord, by setting up the Sacred Fire (*Aupāsana-Agni*) to be generated along with my consort on the path of Dharma.

Preparation of the Sacred Fire and Materials

2. He shall besmear (with cowdung) a surface of the dimension of at least an arrow on each side, draw six lines thereon, sprinkle it, and establish the Fire thereon.

3. To the west of the Fire, let him place a mill-stone with a small stone, and to the north-east, on a heap of grains, let him deposit a vessel of water covered with tender leaves and bedecked with sandalpaste and flowers. To the north, let him arrange seven small heaps of rice. Then, with the bride touching him, he shall put fuel on it, wipe the ground round the fire, strew grass round it, and silently sprinkle water round the fire.

४. अग्नेरपराजितां दिशमारभ्य त्रिरंभसा परिषिच्य, आज्यं लाजैः सह त्रिः पर्यग्निकृत्वा,

५. पवित्राभ्यां आज्यस्य उत्पवनम्—

सवितुष्ट्वा प्रसव उत्पुनाम्यच्छिद्रेण पवित्रेण ।
वसोः सूर्यस्य रश्मिभिः ।। इति ।

प्रधानहोमः, पाणिग्रहणं च

६. त्वमर्यमा भवसि यात्कनीनां
नाम स्वधावन् गुह्यं बिभर्षि ।
अञ्जन्ति मित्रं सुधितं न गोभिः
यद्दम्पती समनसा कृणोषि ।।

स्वाहा ।। अर्यम्ण इदम् ।। इति जुहोति ।

७. ततः प्रत्यङ्मुखस्तिष्ठन् प्राङ्मुख्या उपविष्टाया वध्वा उत्तानस्य करस्य अङ्गुष्ठादिप्रदेशं अवाङ्मुखेन करेण,

4. Then, beginning from the north-east corner, he shall sprinkle water thrice round the fire, and pass a flame thrice round the ghee and fried grains (*lāja*) to be used in the sacrifice.

5. Then comes the purification of the ghee with two *kuśa* blades used as strainers, with the following *mantra*:

By the impulse of Savitā, I purify thee with this uninjured purifier, with the rays of the gracious Sun.

The Main Sacrifice and Pāṇi-grahaṇa

6. Then he pours an oblation in the Fire with the following *mantra*:

Aryaman art thou as regardeth maidens; mysterious is thy name, O self-sustainer.

As a kind friend with streams of milk they anoint thee what time thou makest wife and lord one-minded.

—Do accept this. This offering is made to Aryaman.

7. Then he stands facing the west while the bride sits facing the east. While in that position, she stretches forth her hand with the palm upwards. He grasps the hand of the bride with his hand, palm downwards, and raises her with the *mantra*:

गृभ्णामि ते सौभगत्वाय हस्तं

मया पत्या जरदष्टिर्यथाऽसः ।

भगो अर्यमा सविता पुरंधिः

मह्यं त्वाऽदुर्गार्हपत्याय देवाः ।।

इति मन्त्रेण गृहीत्वा, उत्थापितायाः वध्वाः करौ प्रक्षाल्य, अञ्जलिं कारयित्वा, स्रुवेण आज्यमादाय, उपस्तीर्य, तद्भ्रात्रा भ्रातृस्थानीयेन वा तिष्ठता शूर्पस्थान् लाजान् मुष्टिपरिमितान् द्विरावाप्य स्वयं पात्रस्थान् अञ्जलिस्थानपि आधार्य,

अर्यमणं नु देवं कन्या अग्निमयक्षत ।

स इमां देवो अर्यमा प्र इतो मुञ्चातु नामुतः ।।

स्वाहा ।। अर्यम्णे अग्नये इदम् ।।

इति मन्त्रमुक्त्वा, अविच्छिन्नाञ्जलिना अञ्जल्यग्रे हावयेत् ।

ततो दृषदं उपलां च वर्जयित्वा पूर्णकुम्भसहितमग्निम्,

I take thy hand in mine for happy fortune that thou mayst reach old age with me thy husband.

Gods Aryaman, Bhaga, Savitā, Puraṁdhi have given thee to be my household's mistress.

He washes her hands, makes her form an *añjali* with her two hands joined together and spreads it with ghee by means of a ladle. Then her brother, or some one else standing in his place, while standing, pours twice into her *añjali* (the hollow of the open hands joined together) a handful of fried grains (*lāja*) from the basket. The bridegroom himself applies ghee to the *lāja* in the vessel and in the *añjali* and she pours them into the Fire with unopened hands through the tips of the *añjali*, chanting the following *mantra*:

The girl has indeed worshipped Agni, God Aryaman. May God Aryaman release her from here, but not from there.

—Do accept this. This offering is made to Fire Aryaman.

अमोहमस्मि, सा त्वं; सा त्वमसि, अमोहं; द्यौरहं, पृथिवी त्वं; सामाहं, ऋक् त्वं; तावेह विवहावहै, प्रजां प्रजनयावहै, संप्रियौ रोचिष्णू सुमनस्यमानौ जीवेव शरदः शतम् ।।

इति मन्त्रेण स्वयमग्रे गच्छन्, वध्वा सह प्रदक्षिणीकृत्य तां प्राङ्मुखीं कृत्वा,

इममश्मानमारोह अश्मेव त्वं स्थिरा भव ।
सहस्व पृतनायतः अभितिष्ठ पृतन्यतः ।।

इति मन्त्रेण द्वाभ्यामपि पादाभ्यां दृषदमारोप्य ।

८. पूर्ववत् पुनः तदञ्जलिं उपस्तीर्य, लाजावदानं द्विः कारयित्वा, अभिधार्य ।

वरुणं नु देवं कन्या अग्निमयक्षत ।
स इमां देवो वरुणः प्र इतो मुञ्चातु नामुतः ।।

Leaving out the mill-stone and the small stone, he, going in front accompanied by the bride, walks round the Fire and the vessel full of water, with their right sides turned towards the Fire, chanting the following *mantra*:

This I am, that art thou; that art thou, this am I; the heaven I, the earth thou; the Sāman I, the Rik thou. Come! Let us here marry, Let us beget offspring. Loving, bright, with genial mind, may we live a hundred autumns.

She faces the east and treads on the mill-stone with both feet, with the following *mantra*:

Tread this stone; be firm like a stone. Overcome the enemies, tread the foes down.

8. As before, he again spreads ghee in her *añjali*, causes fried grains to be poured twice into it, sprinkles them with ghee, and she pours the oblation into the fire with the following *mantra*:

The girl has worshipped Agni, God Varuṇa. May God Varuṇa release her from here, but not from there.

—Do accept this. This offering is made to Fire Varuṇa.

स्वाहा ।। वरुणाय अग्नय इदम् ।। इति मन्त्रेण हावयित्वा पूर्ववत् वध्वा सह प्रदक्षिणीकृत्य दृषदमारोप्य,

९. पुनरुपस्तीर्य द्विरावाप्य अभिधार्य,

पूषणं नु देवं कन्या अग्निमयक्षत ।

स इमां देवः पूषा प्र इतो मुञ्चातु नामुतः ।।

स्वाहा ।। पूष्णे अग्नय इदम् ।।

इति मन्त्रेण हावयित्वा,

पुनः पूर्ववत् प्रदक्षिणीकृत्य पुनः दृषदमारोप्य,

१०. स्वयं प्रजापतये स्वाहा ।।

इति स्मरन् अवशिष्टान् लाजान् आत्माभिमुखं शूर्पकोणेनैव निरवशेषं तथैव हावयेत् ।।

सप्तपदी

११. ततो वधूं परिगृह्य, अग्नेरुदीच्यां सप्ततण्डुलराशिष्वपि—

As before, with the bride he walks round the Fire and she treads the mill-stone.

9. Again he spreads ghee in the *añjali*, causes the fried grains to be poured twice into it, sprinkles ghee thereon and the oblation is poured into the fire with the following *mantra*:

The girl has worshipped Agni, God Pūshan. May God Pūshan release her from here, but not from there.

—Do accept this. This offering is made to Fire Pūshan.

As before, with the bride he walks round the Fire and she treads the mill-stone.

10. The bridegroom thinks within himself:

I offer to Prajāpati. Do accept this.

and causes her to pour into the Fire, towards herself, all the grains without leaving any residue, with the neb of the winnow (*śūrpa*).

The Seven Steps

11. He takes the bride's hand and leads her to the north of the Fire, and she takes seven steps on the seven heaps of rice in order, beginning from the west, repeating the following *mantras*:

इष एकपदी भव, सा मामनुव्रता भव ।

पुत्रान् विन्दावहै बहून्, ते सन्तु जरदष्टयः ।।

इति प्रथमराशि,

ऊर्जे द्विपदी भव, सा मामनुव्रता भव ।

पुत्रान् विन्दावहै बहून्, ते सन्तु जरदष्टयः ।।

इति द्वितीयराशि,

रायस्पोषाय त्रिपदी भव, सा मामनुव्रता भव ।

पुत्रान् विन्दावहै बहून्, ते सन्तु जरदष्टयः ।।

इति तृतीयराशि,

मायोभव्याय चतुष्पदी भव, सा मामनुव्रता भव ।

पुत्रान् विन्दावहै बहून्, ते सन्तु जरदष्टयः ।।

इति चतुर्थराशि,

प्रजाभ्यः पञ्चपदी भव, सा मामनुव्रता भव ।

पुत्रान् विन्दावहै बहून्, ते सन्तु जरदष्टयः ।।

इति पञ्चमराशि,

On the first step:

Treading the first step, be thou conducive to *nutrition*. Be thou devoted to me. Let us obtain many sons, and may they live to old age.

On the second step:

Treading the second step, be thou conducive to *strength*. Be thou devoted to me. Let us obtain many sons, and may they live to old age.

On the third step:

Treading the third step, be thou conducive to *increase of wealth*. Be thou devoted to me. Let us obtain many sons, and may they live to old age.

On the fourth step:

Treading the fourth step, be thou conducive to *maintenance of health*. Be thou devoted to me. Let us obtain many sons, and may they live to old age.

On the fifth step:

Treading the fifth step, be thou conducive to *progeny*. Be thou devoted to me. Let us obtain many sons, and may they live to old age.

ऋतुभ्यः षट्पदी भव, सा मामनुव्रता भव ।

पुत्रान् विन्दावहै बहून्, ते सन्तु जरदष्टयः ।।

इति षष्ठराशिं,

संखा सप्तपदी भव सा मामनुव्रता भव ।

पुत्रान् विन्दावहै बहून्, ते सन्तु जरदष्टयः ।।

इति सप्तमराशिं प्रत्यगादितः क्रमेण अभ्युत्क्रामयति ।।

उपसंहारः

१२. स्वशिरसा वधूशिरः संयोज्य कलशस्थं उदकम् आदाय प्रथमं आत्मशिरः, पश्चात् वधूशिरः अभिषिच्य,

१३. पूर्ववत् आसित्वा, "अनेन पाणिग्रहण-होमकर्मणा श्रीयज्ञेश्वरः सुप्रीतः सुप्रसन्नो भवतु" इति भगवदर्पणं कुर्यात् ।

१४. एतदारभ्य विवाहाग्निम् अभिरक्षेत् ।।

On the sixth step:

Treading the sixth step, be thou conducive to *good seasons*. Be thou devoted to me. Let us obtain many sons, and may they live to old age.

On the seventh step:

Treading the seventh step, be *my friend*. Be thou devoted to me. Let us obtain many sons, and may they live to old age.

Conclusion

12. Touching with his head that of the bride, he takes water from the water-pot, sprinkles it first on his own head and then on hers.

13. Seated as before, let him dedicate the sacrifice to the Divine Lord in the words: "May the Lord of sacrifices be pleased with this marriage-sacrifice."

14. From this time forward they shall preserve the Nuptial Fire, tending it morning and evening.

द्वितीयो भागः—वधूवरयोः प्रयाणम्, गृहप्रवेशश्च

१५. वध्वा सह स्वगृहं गच्छन् विवाहाग्निं शकटे अवस्थाप्य तमग्रतो अजस्रं नयन् तेन सह प्रविशेत् ।

१६. तत्रायं क्रमः—

पूषा त्वेतो नयतु हस्त-
गृह्याश्विनौ त्वा प्र वहतां रथेन ।
गृहान् गच्छ गृहपत्नी यथाऽसो
वशिनी त्वं विदथमावदासि ।।

इत्यनेन वधूं यानमारोप्य, यदा सा रोदिति, तदा—

जीवं रुदन्ति वि मयन्ते अध्वरे
दीर्घामनु प्रसितिं दीधियुर्नरः ।
वामं पितृभ्यो य इदं समेरिरे
मयः पतिभ्यो जनयः परिष्वजे ।।

इति मन्त्रं जपेत् ।

PART II. HOME-ENTRY OF THE COUPLE

Journey Home

15. Starting for his own home with the bride, the bridegroom places the Nuptial Fire in a cart; and always conveying it in front, he shall enter his house with it.

16. The order of the ceremony is as follows: The bride is made to mount the chariot (by the husband) with the following *mantra*:

Let Pūshan take thy hand and hence conduct thee. May the two Aśvins on their car transport thee.

Go to the house to be the household's mistress, and speak as the lady to thy gathered people.

If she weeps he shall pronounce the following *mantra*:

They mourn the living, cry aloud, at sacrifice: the men have set their thoughts upon a distant cast.

A lovely thing for fathers who have gathered here—a joy to husbands—are the wives their arms shall clasp.

१७. रात्रौ ध्रुवम् अरुन्धतीं सप्त ऋषीन् च वध्वा सह दृष्ट्वा, "जीवपत्नी प्रजां विन्देम" इति मन्त्रं पत्न्या वाचयेत् ततो वधूः वाङ्नियमं विसृजेत् ।।

गृहप्रवेशः

१८. स्वगृहसमीपं गत्वा वधूपाणिं संगृह्य,

इ॒ह प्रि॒यं प्रजया॑ ते॒ समृ॑ध्यताम्
अ॒स्मिन् गृ॒हे गार्ह॑पत्याय जागृहि ।
ए॒ना प॒त्या त॑न्वं सं सुजस्वा॒था॑
जीव्री वि॒द॒थमा वदाथः ।।

इति मन्त्रेण अन्तर्गृहं प्रविश्य,

प्रवेशहोमः

१९. विवाहाग्निं प्रज्वाल्य अन्वाधाय प्रत्यग्नेः स्वदक्षिणदेशे प्राग्ग्रीवं उत्तरलोम आनडुहं चर्म आस्तीर्य, तस्मिन् वधं उपवेश्य,

17. At night, the couple having seen the stars Dhruva, Arundhatī and the seven Ṛishis, the bride shall break the silence and recite the following *mantra*:

May my husband live long and I get progeny.

Entering the Home

18. On approaching his own house, he shall take her hand and lead her into the house, with the following *mantra*:

Happy be thou and prosper with thy children here: be vigilant to rule thy household in this home.

Closely unite thy body with this man, thy lord, so shall ye, full of years, address your company.

Entry-Sacrifice

19. He shall make the Nuptial Fire blaze and put additional fuel thereon. Then to be west of the Fire and to his right he shall spread a bull's hide—with the neck to the east and with the hair outside—and make the bride to sit thereon. While she takes hold of him

आ नः प्रजां जनयतु प्रजापति-

राजरसाय समनक्त्वर्यमा ।

अदुर्मङ्गलीः पतिलोकमाविश

शं नो भव द्विपदे शं चतुष्पदे ।।

स्वाहा ।। सूर्यासावित्र्या इदम् ।।

अघोरचक्षुरपतिघ्न्येधि

शिवा पशुभ्यः सुमनाः सुवर्चाः ।

वीरसूर्देवकामा स्योना

शं नो भव द्विपदे शं चतुष्पदे ।।

स्वाहा ।। सूर्यासावित्र्या इदम् ।।

इमां त्वमिन्द्र मीढ्वः सुपुत्रां सुभगां कृणु ।

दशास्यां पुत्रानाधेहि पतिमेकादशं कृधि ।।

स्वाहा ।। सूर्यासावित्र्या इदम् ।।

he shall make four oblations of ghee with the four following *mantras*:

So may Prajāpati bring forth children to us: may Aryaman adorn us till old age come nigh.

Not inauspicious, enter thou thy husband's house, bring blessing to our bipeds and quadrupeds.

—Do accept this. This offering is made to Sūryā-Sāvitrī.

Not evil-eyed, No-slayer-of-thy-husband, bring weal to cattle, radiant, gentle-hearted.

Loving the Gods, delightful, bearing heroes, bring blessing to our bipeds and quadrupeds.

—Do accept this. This offering is made to Sūryā-Sāvitrī.

O Bounteous Indra, make this bride blest in her sons and fortunate.

Vouchsafe to her ten sons and make her husband the eleventh man.

—Do accept this. This offering is made to Sūryā-Sāvitrī.

संराज्ञी श्वशुरे भव संराज्ञी श्वश्र्वां भव ।
ननान्दरि संराज्ञी भव संराज्ञी अधि देवृषु ।।

स्वाहा ।। सूर्यासावित्र्या इदम् ।। इति चतस्र आहुतीर्हुत्वा,

हृदयावमर्शनम्

२०. समञ्जन्तु विश्वे देवाः
समापो हृदयानि नौ ।
सं मातरिश्वा सं धाता
समु देष्ट्री दधातु नौ ।।

इति मन्त्रेण हुतशिष्टाज्येन स्वस्य वध्वाश्च हृदये अङ्क्त्वा,

उपसंहारः

२१. "अनेन प्रवेशहोमेन श्रीयज्ञेश्वरः सुप्रीतः सुप्रसन्नो भवतु" इति भगवर्दर्पणं कुर्यात् ।

Over thy husband's father and thy husband's mother bear full sway.

Over the sister of thy lord, over his brothers rule supreme.

—Do accept this. This offering is made to Sūryā-Sāvitrī.

Heart-Uniting

20. Then with the remnant of the ghee he besmears the heart-region of himself and the bride with the following *mantra*:

So may the Universal Gods, so may the Waters join our hearts.

May Mātariśvan, Dhātā and Dēshtrī together bind us close.

Conclusion

21. Let him dedicate the sacrifice to the Divine Lord in the words "May the Lord of sacrifices be pleased with this entry sacrifice."

२२. पतिपुत्रवतीभिः सुवासिनीभिः नीराजितविग्रहः ब्राह्मणेभ्य आशिषो गृहीत्वा वध्वा सह अभिनन्दन् आसीत ।

तृतीयो भागः—गर्भाधानम्

२३. त्रिरात्रं ब्रह्मचारिणौ अलंकुर्वाणौ अधःशायिनौ अक्षारलवणाशिनौ भूयास्ताम् ।

२४. व्रतान्ते वरो वध्वा सह सूर्यासूक्तं श्रुत्वा तत्पाठकाय वधूपरिहितं वस्त्रद्वयं दापयेत् । अन्नं ब्राह्मणेभ्यः । अथ स्वस्त्ययनं वाचयेत् ।

इति विवाहप्रयोगः

———

22. Then, while ladies whose husbands are alive and have sons alive make *ārati* (the waving of light, etc., with good wishes) and Brāhmaṇas utter benedictions, he sits happy with the bride.

PART III. CONSUMMATION

23. For three nights they should remain chaste, wear ornaments, sleep on the ground, eat no saline or pungent food.

24. At the end of the period of this observance, the bride and the bridegroom should hear the Sūryā-hymn recited, and then (after consummation) give the bride's two garments to the Brāhmaṇa who has recited the hymn, and food to Brāhmaṇas. These Brāhmaṇas shall pronounce benedictions upon the couple.

Thus the Marriage Ritual.

VEDIC MARRIAGE RITUAL

SOME EXPLANATIONS

THE Vedic ritual of marriage is clothed in an archaic language and imagery whose meaning may not be quite clear to the modern minds not versed in Vedic symbolism. By explaining their meaning the parties and witnesses to the marriage will be enabled to follow intelligently the course of the ritual and thereby add to its efficacy by raising their thought to the high spiritual ideas symbolised in it. Marriage, briefly, is the pledged union of a man and a woman who propose to tread together the path of Dharma or spiritual culture leading to realisation of the oneness of the Self with Brahman. The Vedic marriage ritual is only a symbolic representation of this high spiritual ideal of marriage and married life, which the couple ought to cherish throughout their career as householders. Āśvalāyana lays down a short ritual which represents the irreducible minimum and forms the common factor of the several forms of Vedic ritual now in vogue. Though short it is complete in itself. The meaning of the several parts of this ritual will now be explained.

1. *The Preparation of Sacred Fire and Materials.*— In the Vedic nomenclature, the recognition of the divine nature of one's Self and the determination to lead a life of spiritual devotion is said to be the gene-

ration of the sacred fire, and that fire is tended by an ever-watchful direction of life-activities in the service of the Divine Lord. This sacred spiritual fire is given three or five names according to the specific directions in which it is used in life-work. The placing of fire on five vertical lines resting on a horizontal sixth means that the one spiritual fire is generated in five centres of activity and is used in as many directions, such as desire, thought, understanding, speech and sympathy. This spiritual fire is in the scheme now in vogue generated at the initiation (Upanayana) ceremony done in early youth, and is tended through the years of Brahmacharya (spiritual discipline) which precede marriage. It is freshly enkindled now at the time of marriage by pouring ghee (clarified butter) upon it, that is, by directing once more the purified mind and heart towards God.

2. *The Main Sacrifice.*—God is here invoked as Aryaman, the Lord of Love, who as the ruler of the finer affections has brought about the union of the couple in marriage, in response to their earnest prayers for a suitable life-partner.

3. *The Grasping of the Hand.*—Then the bridegroom takes hold of the bride's hand as his God-given life-partner and mistress of the household.

4. *Walking round the Fire.*—Then the couple walk three times round the fire, the bride being made to tread on the stone each time. On these three occasions the Divine Lord of the bride's special

devotion is addressed severally as Aryaman, the Lord of Love, as Varuṇa, the Lord of spiritual aspiration and wisdom, and as Pūshan, the Lord of vital power; and His blessing is invoked each time for her prosperity in her new home, for her unfailing success in the concerns of the other world, and for constant fidelity unassailable under all circumstances. By walking round the fire with their right side towards it, the couple, as the Veda explains, pledge themselves to follow the Sun's course, that is, to lead a life of co-operation with the Divine Will in Evolution, devoting all their love, knowledge and life-energy in the Lord's service to all concerns of life.

5. *The Oblation of Fried Grains.*—Accompanying each invocation, it means readiness of the couple to direct to the service of the Lord all the possessions and enjoyments they come by in the exercise of their ever-growing powers.

6. *The Offering to Prajāpati* of the remnant of the fried grains in the fire towards themselves means that the immediate aim of their life-work as householders is the attainment of the stature of Prajāpati or Manu.

7. *The Seven Steps.*—The bride is led by the bridegroom through seven steps on the seven heaps of rice. By this the couple pledge themselves to a life of co-operation as equal co-partners in all activities, concerned respectively with acquisition of nourishment, strength, wealth, health, progeny, gifts of the seasons,

and spiritual merits. Harmonious union in these seven concerns which comprise the earth-life forms what we may call typical human friendship.

8. *Conclusion of Marriage Sacrifice.*—Now the couple have become husband and wife in the full Vedic sense of the terms. The bathing of their heads with the sanctified water indicates their full immersion in the spiritual life as householders. The marriage fire thus set up should be maintained unquenched from this time onward and tended every morning and evening.

9. *Journey Home.*—The couple start for their new home, which is set up with the joint chattels brought by the couple as their portions from their respective family properties. It may take a few minutes or even a few days to reach the home.

10. *Entering the New Home.*—On approaching the new home the bride is accosted as the queen of the new household, having to direct all its temporal and spiritual affairs so as to conduce to the well-being of the family and all dependents, including animals.

11. *Entering-Sacrifice and Heart-Union.*—Prayers are offered to Gods invoking them to bless the couple with progeny and a strong and abiding love.

12. *Consummation.*—Prior to consummation of marriage the couple shall observe celibacy for three days at least while living in close association. According to Vedic Law, the longer this period of self-restraint the more virile and spiritual will be the offspring.